

SB 191
MA55

INFORMATION
IN REGARD
TO
CORN CLUBS
FOR
ALABAMA BOYS



ISSUED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
1910

SB191
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INTRODUCTION.

The 1900 Census report shows that the people of Alabama engaged in gainful occupation are distributed as follows:

Professional services	2 %
Trade and transportation.....	6.7%
Manufacturing and mechanical.....	10.3%
Domestic and personal service.....	13.4%
Agricultural pursuits	67.6%

This shows that a large per cent of our people in Alabama are making a living by farming and that all other occupations sink into insignificance when compared with agriculture. The very location, climate and soil of Alabama make it essentially an agricultural State. Any effort, therefore, on the part of the schools, colleges and educational forces to educate the people along agricultural lines and to improve farming methods, will directly increase the earning capacity of the only producing class and hence largely benefit the whole people.

For many years agriculture was not taught in our schools because it was thought that there was nothing to learn about farming, that the various subjects along agricultural lines had no educational value, that culture could not be obtained by a study of the origin and formulation of soils, of how the plants live and grow, and of the different kinds of animals and how they are fed. Now, however, the idea that time properly spent on these subjects will give as much mental discipline as the same amount of time spent on other subjects of the school curricula is rapidly gaining ground, and agriculture has a fundamental place in the courses of study of practically all of our schools.

Again in the Census report for 1900, we learn that of the 20,685,427 acres of farm lands in Alabama only 41.8%, or less than half, is improved and under cultivation. It is one of the problems of agricultural education to aid in the development of the other 58.2% of this farming land, as well as to see that better methods are used on the farms under cultivation.

The 1909 Crop Report shows that Alabama produced a total of 43,646,000 bushels of corn on 3,233,000 acres of land, or an average of only 13.5 bushels per acre, valued at 37,099,000 dollars. This made it necessary for Alabama to purchase approximately 11,000,000 bushels of corn for 1909. Corn is the main food supply on the farm, and if the farmer has sufficient corn he will also raise his meat, and an ample supply of these two food articles on the farm therefore indicates thrift and prosperity in any community. It is a well established fact that no agricultural section can prosper as it should and purchase a large amount of its main food supply. With a little better preparation of the soil, better seed, more intelligent use of fertilizers and better cultivation of the crop, it would be an easy matter to double the yield of corn in Alabama, and thereby increase the wealth of the farmers of the State 37,099,000 dollars annually from corn alone.

OBJECTS OF THE CORN CLUB MOVEMENT.

The objects of organizing the boys under twenty-one years old in Alabama into Corn Clubs are to increase the production of corn, to improve the seed, to aid the farmer in better methods of cultivation and a more intelligent use of fertilizers, to increase the interest of the farm boys in agriculture, and to encourage them to get an education along agricultural lines and remain on the farm. Of course arousing interest in one crop will lead to similar lines of work with other crops and will ultimately result in more careful study of methods with all lines of farming. This will lead to increased production on the farm and will lay the foundations for better schools, better roads, better churches, improvement of the social life in the rural districts and a more contented and happy people.

PLAN OF ORGANIZATION

As this work is an educational matter it is our purpose to secure and promote co-operation of the county superintendents, teachers and schools. It is hoped

and urged, therefore, that every county superintendent will become interested in this and that every teacher will see that several boys in each school and community are members of some Corn Club .

It has been found best in most cases to enlist the interest of the county superintendent and secure a list of all the teachers in the county where the work is undertaken. A letter is then addressed to each of these teachers requesting the names of boys who are interested in the movement.

The main work for the present will be with corn. In each county where the work is undertaken prizes will be offered to the boy growing the greatest number of bushels per acre and also to the boy exhibiting, at a meeting in the fall, the ten best ears of corn. Prizes for each county will be announced to the boys as soon as the money for the prizes is contributed.

No particular method of culture will be prescribed but plenty of literature on the best methods of corn raising will be furnished the boys from time to time.

WHO MAY BECOME MEMBERS.

It is our desire to have every boy, not over twenty-one years old and large enough to work on the farm, becomes a member of the Corn Club in the community where this work is started. We wish especially to have boys who live on the farm engaged in this work, or if a man owns a farm and lives in town his son may also become a member, or if a boy has no land and has enough interest in the work to rent the land and enter the club, we shall be glad to have him also.

BOYS' CORN CLUBS.

By Harry C. Gunnels, Superintendent of Education of Alabama.

During a recent trip of the Southern States Superintendents of Education through the Middle West in an endeavor to study the work of the rural schools as this work relates to rural life, I was asked to

make an especial study of the accomplishment of Boys' Corn Clubs.

In making this rapid study, I had in mind the question as to whether the organization of these clubs as they exist in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and other states of the Middle West, could be made applicable to conditions in the southern states, and especially to Alabama.

The great awakening of a sentiment among all classes of people towards an education looking to the betterment of our farms and of our rural conditions makes the study of any question relating to farm life and farm work a pleasant one.

The State of Iowa is in many respects—in size, nature of soil, mineral products and in other things, similar to Alabama. Climatic conditions in Alabama are far superior. The seasons are longer.

It occurred to me, therefore, that there must be a reason for the fact that in Iowa from seventy-five to one hundred and twenty bushels of corn are made on an acre while in Alabama, on soil equally as good, with climatic conditions much better, there is a yield of twenty-five or thirty bushels per acre. I could not help thinking that there must be a reason why farm lands in Iowa are worth from \$100 to \$300 an acre while lands equally as valuable for farming purposes in Alabama can be purchased for \$20.00 or \$30.00 per acre.

It seemed to me that there must be a reason for the prosperous condition of the farmers in the Middle West. If a farmer with a small farm purchased at \$250 per acre in Iowa, on credit perhaps, can have an elegant home, educate his children, dash around the country in an automobile, why can not such conditions exist in the South—in Alabama.

In my study of this question, I came to the conclusion that the prosperous condition of this Western section of our country—the granary of the world—is the direct result of a system of education which from the kindergarten almost has had for its object the inculcating in the minds of the boys, and of the girls, that there is a dignity in labor, that there is no disgrace in working on the farm, that farm life is the

most pleasant of all life, that more money can be made by raising corn and wheat than in selling ribbons and pins, that the girl has more freedom in looking after dairy and can make more money for herself than she can by doing clerical work in some city office, and that above all by putting the same amount of brains into the soil—into the actual work of the farm life—greater returns in every way can be brought about.

One of the organizations which my investigation disclosed as a potent factor in this line of endeavor is what is known as the Boys' Corn Clubs. These clubs exist in almost all the rural schools in Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota and the other corn growing states. I discovered that an enthusiasm and an interest and a rivalry existed which naturally brought about the very best results.

A farmer in Iowa told me that six years ago he was making an average of forty bushels of corn per acre. A Boys' Corn Club was organized in the district school. His fourteen year old boy came to him and asked for an acre of land upon which to make his experiments. The fourteen year old boy did all the work, selected the seed and the fertilizers, planned himself, under the advice perhaps of his teacher, the method of cultivation and at the end of the year this acre of land which had been yielding about forty bushels of corn produced one hundred and thirty-six bushels. This old German farmer said to me that he immediately came to the conclusion that if his fourteen year old boy could make one hundred and thirty-six bushels of corn on an acre where he had been making only forty it was time for him to get busy. He said that as an experiment he took the boy out of school for a year and put him in charge of the corn growing on his farm. The results were marvelous. In six years the average yield of corn on this farm has increased at least 100%. The value of the farm has increased equally as much. The boy, so the farmer said, would graduate next year from the University of Wisconsin where he is making a specialty of Agriculture and would "come back to the farm." This farmer stated that there were numerous other

non-progressive farmers like himself among his friends who had gotten inspiration from the work done by the boys and had taken hold of advanced methods in cultivation of corn and other farm products. This condition, I was told, exists in almost every corn growing state and has been largely brought about through the instrumentality of enthusiastic members of Boys' Corn Clubs or similar organizations.

Conditions in the states of the Middle West are somewhat different from conditions in the south. The rural schools, the high schools, the agricultural schools are more closely articulated and correlated with the universities than similar schools are in the south. The universities place greater stress upon every endeavor looking to the increase of interest in farm life and farm work.

It will be some time before in the southern states this close relationship can be brought to fruition. It must come, however. It will come. The tendency of the present thought is that something must be done to get out of the soil, which nature has given us, the best that there is in it and to make the farm and farm life as enjoyable and as uplifting as city life.

The work of the National Department of Agriculture is tending largely along this line and through the efforts of Dr. Knapp and Mr. Martin numbers of boys' clubs have been organized in Alabama and in the southern states.

Nothing but good can come from this work. My investigation of the results in the Middle West convince me that great good could and would come from it.

The State Department of Education of Alabama is encouraging in every way the organization of these clubs and the speakers who go from this Department over the state are stressing this line of work.



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